

## Frequently asked questions overview

You will be able to answer frequently asked questions about:

- MTCS errors
- MTCS reports
- MTCS reporting problems



## Common MTCS error questions

- What should I do about the 2b error - old effective date of action?

The **2b error - old effective date of action** occurs when a PHA submits an annual reexamination to MTCS in advance. If a PHA submits an annual reexamination in advance and then submits a subsequent action (e.g., end of participation) that is earlier than the effective date of action for the annual reexamination, MTCS issues a fatal error.

MTCS issues a fatal error because MTCS retains the *most recent* transmission for the household, defined by the effective date of action. There are several circumstances when this error could occur:

- If you submit an end of participation or portability move-out with an earlier effective date of action than what MTCS currently has for the family in the database.

**Solution:** In this situation the **existing** record (e.g., an annual reexamination conducted in advance) in MTCS is wrong. The MTCS team is working to correct this problem. In the interim, send the End of Participation or the portability move out with the same effective date of action as the Form currently in MTCS. The End of Participation or portability move-out will override the current Form.

- If you send a proper older Form for a family that was never transmitted and MTCS rejected it.

**Solution:** MTCS keeps only the most recent Form for a family in the database. There is no need to transmit an earlier action for the family if the latest record in MTCS includes accurate information. If there are inaccuracies in the current Form, correct it, and resubmit it with the same effective date of action to MTCS.

- If you resubmit an incorrect effective date of action with a correct date.

**Solution:** MTCS cannot fix this problem at this time. The MTCS team is working to correct it.

## Common MTCS error questions

- Where can I find a list of all MTCS error codes?

You can find a list of all **error codes** and explanations in the Technical Reference Guide. The Technical Reference Guide contains the business rules, character length, and format specifications for each field transmitted to MTCS. You can find the Technical Reference Guide at:

<http://www.hud.gov/pih/systems/mtcs/document.html>

## Common MTCS error questions

I received several warning errors in my error analysis report.

- How can I find the records that contain these errors in MTCS?

MTCS does not provide a report that lists all the **warning errors** in a PHA transmission. Through the Error Analysis report, MTCS only provides a sample of the warning errors in a transmission for PHA reference.

Remember, warning errors indicate potential data collection errors. MTCS does not reject Form HUD-50058 data with warning errors. However, you should go back to the data, verify the information, and use the error message to improve future transmissions.

## **Common MTCS error questions**

I sent a Form HUD-50058 nine months ago as a new admission and received a fatal error.

- Does MTCS accept subsequent 50058 submissions, like an interim reexamination, for that resident or do I need to correct the new admission first?

If you received a fatal error for your new admission, MTCS rejected the Form and did not store it in the database. You can transmit subsequent Form HUD-50058 data for the tenant that MTCS will accept if it's free of fatal errors.

If you try to submit the new admission after MTCS accepted subsequent (i.e., later) transmissions for that family, MTCS will reject the new admission. MTCS will reject the record because its effective date of action is older than the Form it currently has in the database.



MTCS is not a historical database. It only stores the most recent Form based on the effective date of action for a family.

## **Common MTCS error questions**

I discovered the majority of my errors are for Lines 9c, 9d, and 9f fields. My error report reflects the correct data I transmitted. My software rounds my calculations to the next dollar at \$.51.

- How does MTCS round its numbers?

MTCS reports data in whole numbers. It rounds a number up if it is greater than or equal to .50. It rounds a number down if it is .49 or less.

MTCS also rounds every line and every calculation of Form HUD-50058 data. MTCS only reports information in whole numbers.

## Common report questions

I recently checked my Ad Hoc reports and found Social Security numbers that do not match the numbers I transmitted to MTCS.

- What happened to these Social Security numbers?

MTCS instructions require PHAs to transmit "999999999" in cases where a member of the household does not have a valid Social Security number. MTCS rejects records when the Head of household's Social Security number is blank.

MTCS uses the Head of household's Social Security number as the primary identifier of the family's data. MTCS creates a unique identifier when a PHA transmits "999999999" in the Social Security number field. MTCS uses the Head of household's sex, birth day, month, and year in addition to the first and last initial of the resident's name. If a PHA transmits a Social Security number with all nines, MTCS will convert this number to:

- first digit is either M or F (for male or female)
- next two digits are the Head of household's birth year
- next two digits are the Head of household's birth month
- next two digits are the Head of household's birth day
- final two digits are the first and last initial of the resident's name



If you transmit a record with a Social Security number that is "999-99-9999" continue to use that format when you submit information to MTCS. Do not submit the unique identifier that MTCS creates for the Head of household.

## Common report questions

- What does the message, "income limit unavailable" mean?

The "**Income Limit Unavailable**" message occurs when MTCS cannot obtain geographical information on tenants due to incorrect or incorrectly formatted addresses. If this message appears, verify the accuracy and format of tenant addresses in the files you transmitted to HUD and resubmit any changes. When MTCS receives the addresses, it will send them to a geocoding service. Expect it to take about a month to see the results of the geocoding in MTCS.



On October 1, 1999, you can access unit address information in MTCS via Ad Hoc selection.



## Common report questions

- How do I run an Ad Hoc report for all families in my PHA?

To run an **Ad Hoc report** for all families in your PHA:

- Select **Ad Hoc selection** from the Main Menu of the MTCS application
- Click **Go**

The Ad Hoc selection menu will appear on your screen.

- Select "All" from the **Type of Action Selection** in the Ad Hoc Selection Menu screen
- Click "**Go To Field Selection**"
- Select "**Program**"
- Select "**Project Number**"
- Select "**Type of Action**"
- Select "**Effective Date of Action**"
- Select "**Head of household Last Name & Sr., Jr., etc.**"
- Select "**Head of household First Name**"
- Select "**Head of household Social Security Number**"
- Click "**Run Query**"

Large PHAs should use the Next Day Ad Hoc download option to generate large volumes of data. They may have difficulty running the report to the screen.



As of September 30, 1999, MTCS will also provide new immediate downloads of preselected fields in addition to standard Ad Hoc selection and report generation capabilities. This option will replace the current report that the Hotline runs for large PHAs.

## Common report questions

- What does the "\*\*\*" mean in a report field?

If a "\*\*\*" appears in a report field, it means that there was not enough data in the database to perform a calculation. MTCS requires at least 10 or more families in the database to display these calculations. Otherwise, it will display a "\*\*\*" in the report column field.

## Common report questions

- Where does MTCS derive unit count data for both Public Housing and Section 8?

MTCS obtains **unit count information** from IBS for public housing and HUDCAPS for Section 8. IBS uses unit count data submitted by PHAs on Form HUD-51234, the Occupancy Report. HUDCAPS obtains Section 8 data from the PHA's Year-End Settlement Statement.

Total Available Units is the total number of public housing units or total number of Section 8 contracted units under the PHA's Annual Contribution Contract (ACC). The Total Occupied Units represents the total number of public housing and Section 8 occupied units.



Remember MTCS recently received an new HUDCAPS file. You will be able to see new unit count information in the September MTCS reports.

## **Common report questions**

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- Why can't I find the Unit Assignment Discrepancy report for Section 8?

To access the **Unit Assignment Discrepancy report**, or any detailed report, select a single program from the Program Selection list.

Single programs include:

- Public housing
- Indian mutual help
- Indian rental
- Section 8 certificates
- Section 8 vouchers
- Section 8 moderate rehabilitation



If you select a combined program type, such as 'Section 8 certificates and vouchers' or 'All Offices of PIH', the Detailed reports will not appear on the report selection screen.

## Common report questions

- I submitted all the annual reexaminations to MTCS on time but some families appear on my Late Reexamination Discrepancy report, why?

MTCS updates the **Late Reexamination Discrepancy** report (and all other summary and detailed reports) during the monthly summarization process. If you transmitted the data successfully before noon (EST) on the last Friday of the month, the Late Reexamination Discrepancy report will show your updated information the following month.

One way to check the data is to run an Ad Hoc report to check data for the tenants listed on your Late Reexamination Discrepancy report. Discrepancies often occur when there are two different Social Security numbers in MTCS for the same Head of household.

Occasionally, PHAs may accidentally submit two different Social Security numbers for the same tenant. When the time comes for an annual reexamination, the PHA transmits the data correctly for the tenant under one Social Security number but MTCS also has information on the same tenant under an incorrect Social Security number. As a result, MTCS generates a late reexamination discrepancy based on that erroneous data.



Remember Ad Hoc is updated weekly and MTCS reports are updated monthly. So you may occasionally find a Late Reexamination report that indicates a family is overdue for an annual reexamination but, when you look up the family using Ad Hoc, the family has a current reexamination. This occurs because of the processing delay between Ad Hoc and MTCS reports.

## Common report questions

- Why do the fields in the Resident Characteristics report not equal 100 percent?

Not all distribution amounts equal **100 percent** on MTCS summary reports. Many of the reports contain multiple data distributions that can apply to the same family. For example, PHAs can submit more than one source of income in the Income report for distribution by source of income. Slight deviations from 100 percent may also be due to rounding.

## Common report questions

We manage by project at my PHA.

- How can I use MTCS reports to analyze operations and performance by PHA project?

MTCS reports provide PHAs with public housing information at the **project** level. Use these reports to compare resident populations across sites for deconcentration or to compare reporting rates by project.

For example, you can access the Resident Characteristics report by project to determine each projects reporting rate in MTCS. You can use this report to identify projects that meet the 85 percent reporting requirement and those that need assistance to collect and transmit data to MTCS.



Please see the handout that accompanies your participation guide for more information on how to use MTCS reports to analyze PHA operations by project.

## **Common reporting problems**

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MTCS has several families in the database that do not belong to my PHA.

- How can I fix this problem?

PHAs occasionally find Form HUD-50058 records for tenants that do not reside in their PHA. This can happen when a PHA accidentally submits data with the wrong HA ID. If you discover families in the MTCS database that do not belong to your PHA, contact Tom Williams at ***Thomas\_J.\_Williams@hud.gov*** to resolve the problem.

To reduce the number of PHAs who accidentally submit families with the wrong HA ID, MTCS is working on a solution to implement in Fall 1999. Watch Quick Update! on the MTCS web site for details on this procedure. Quick Update! is available at:

**<http://www.hud.gov/pih/systems/mtcs/quick.html>**



HUD Headquarters cannot alter data in MTCS because it compromises data quality and integrity.



## Common reporting questions

- How is my reporting rate calculated?

HUD calculates a PHA's **reporting rate** by counting the number of Form HUD-50058 successfully reported to MTCS divided by the Total Occupied Units. The formula to calculate your public housing reporting rate is:

$$= \frac{\text{Total number of Forms on hand}}{\text{Total number of occupied units}} \times 100$$

The formula to calculate your Section 8 reporting rate will change on October 1, 1999, to include the effects of portability. The new formula is:

$$= \frac{\text{Total number of Forms on hand}}{\text{Total number of units administered}} \times 100$$

HUD is aware that there are several circumstances that can affect reporting rates and require PHAs to submit forbearance requests to their local Field Office or TARC:

- Discrepancies between PHA inventory and "occupied units" in MTCS
- Portability move-outs
- Participation in the Moving to Work Demonstration

For more information about what these circumstances are, go to the Notice PIH 99-2 Processing Guidelines available at:

<http://www.hud.gov/pih/systems/mtcs/notice/pih99-2.html>

## Common reporting questions

- Why is my reporting rate over 100 percent?

It is possible to have a reporting rate over 100 percent. The likely reasons for it are if a PHA:

- **Fails to submit End of Participations.** If you do not submit End of Participations to MTCS in a timely manner, those records remain in the database and falsely reflect the number of families in your PHA. This can cause your reporting rate to be over 100 percent. To remedy this problem, run an Ad Hoc report to determine the families remain in the database and submit end of participations for those families.
- **Increases its program size over the past year.** If a PHA's program size grew over the past year and PHA staff diligently reported Form HUD-50058 data to MTCS, your PHA could have a reporting rate over 100 percent. This occurs because the total number of occupied units in HUDCAPS or IBS is lower than the PHA's actual program size.
- **Transmits Form HUD-50058 data for another PHA using the wrong HA ID.** To reduce the number of PHAs who accidentally submit families with the wrong HA ID, MTCS is working on a solution to implement Fall 1999. Until that time, if you experience this problem, contact Tom Williams at ***Thomas\_J.\_Williams@hud.gov*** to resolve the problem.
- **Submits all "9s" for a Social Security number and then submits the correct Social Security number** at a later date. In this case, HUD has duplicate records for the family. To fix this problem, submit an End of Participation for the family using the incorrect Social Security number. Do not make any changes to the family record with the correct Social Security number.
- **Experiences data entry errors.** Social Security numbers are often miskeyed. One approach to fix the problem is to run an Ad Hoc report to determine information is incorrect in MTCS. If you find duplicate entries for a family, you can submit an End of Participation for the incorrect record and eliminate inaccurate data in MTCS.

## Common reporting questions

- What are the upcoming deadlines for Notice PIH 99-2?

Important Notice PIH 99-2 deadlines include:

**December 1999** - End of the semi-annual assessment period

**January 2000** - Field Offices review PHA reporting rates

**February 15, 2000** - Deadline for PHAs to submit forbearance requests

**March 15, 2000** - Deadline for Field Offices to respond to forbearance requests

**June 2000** - End of the semi-annual assessment period

**July 2000** - Field Offices review PHA reporting rates

**August 15, 2000** - Deadline for PHAs to submit forbearance requests

**September 15, 2000** - Deadline for Field Offices to respond to forbearance requests

## **Common reporting questions**

I've heard HUDCAPS data in MTCS is old and it affects my reporting rates.

- When will MTCS get a new extract of HUDCAPS data?

MTCS recently received a **new HUDCAPS file**. You will be able to see updated Section 8 unit count information in the September MTCS reports, available in mid-October.

## Common reporting questions

Today is September 7.

- Where are the August MTCS reports?

MTCS generates reports using a process called summarization. On the first Friday of the month, summarization begins and lasts approximately 5 to 7 days. This month's summarization started on September 3. Look for **August MTCS reports** in mid-September. Remember, however, you can access reports at any time.

## Common reporting questions

- What are the benefits of transmitting data via the Internet?

The **Internet** is an excellent tool to use to submit data to MTCS. Increasingly, HUD has chosen to use the Internet to collect data, process forms, disseminate information, and communicate with its constituents.

**Internet data is more flexible than SprintMail.** It can accommodate larger volumes of data which is particularly helpful to large PHAs. MTCS also provides immediate confirmations to PHAs that transmit data via the Internet.

We also suggest several Internet transmission tips:

**Download the most recent version of a browser.** Upgraded browser capabilities will help speed up your transmissions. You can download most browsers from the Internet for free.

**Transmit large files before 9 a.m. or after 8 p.m. (EST)** to avoid long delays.

**Obtain a 14.4K baud modem or faster.** The speed of your modem will affect the speed of your transmissions. A higher baud modem will yield faster transmission times.

## Common reporting questions

- What is the difference between FRS 2.0 and MTCS?

**FRS 2.0** is a free software program developed by HUD for PHAs. PHAs can use FRS 2.0 to transmit Form HUD-50058 data. HUD uses **MTCS**, a database and Internet-based computer application, to capture, store, and report Form HUD-50058 data.

## Common reporting questions

I submitted 4,000 Forms to MTCS but my HA Delinquency report says MTCS only has 1,000.

- What happened to the missing Forms?

There are several reasons why your **HA Delinquency Report** may contain fewer Forms than you transmitted to MTCS:

- You may have transmitted duplicate records to MTCS. In this case, MTCS will only store the most recent record based on its effective date of action.
- Another explanation for missing records is fatal errors. MTCS does not store records that contain fatal errors. Check your Error and Error Analysis reports to determine if MTCS rejected a record due to fatal errors.
- It is also possible that you transmitted information with the wrong HA code. If your transmission contained the wrong HA code, MTCS will credit those Forms to the wrong PHA.
- Often PHAs transmit records with an effective date of action that is more than 18 months old. Since MTCS is not a historical database, it purges data that is more than 18 months old during the summarization process. So while MTCS may accept these records, it does not store them in the database.



## Common reporting questions

I receive lots of error notifications from MTCS and I think I may have a software problem.

- What do you suggest I do?

Occasionally your **software** can cause you to receive fatal and warning errors. There are several steps you can take to analyze the problem.

- **View your Error Analysis report** to see where most of the errors occur. Try to identify if the person who enters the Form HUD-50058 information into the software does not understand what to do or if its something “behind the scenes.”
- **Contact the MTCS Hotline** to determine if your software complies with MTCS format specifications and business rules.
- **Contact your vendor**, if appropriate, to find out if they can provide additional support, training, or software customization. Remember to consult your software contract or agreement to find out what level of support you negotiated with your vendor.
- **Contact other PHAs** that use the same software. Ask other PHAs if they experienced the same problem and how they fixed it. This discussion may help you speak to your vendor about the problem.